

167: ASSESSING NATIONAL QUALITY SYSTEMS IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION

Shaw C.D., Augustine S., Crawford A.

Objective:

To assess the institutionalisation of quality improvement in the Caribbean Region

Methods:

A self-assessment tool was adapted from "A background to national quality policy in health systems" (WHO Europe, 2002) to measure the institutionalisation of a national quality programme in terms of action taken by member states in terms of the action taken on policy, organisation, methods and resources which have been applied. Quality coordinators from health ministries in 14 countries met in Dominica in November 2002 under the auspices of PAHO to review the results and the assessment tool.

Results:

A pilot study of eight countries indicated that staff training, statutory regulation and local systematic quality improvement initiatives were prevalent but external assessment programmes, formal budgeting for quality improvement, national resource centres and published policies for quality improvement were rare.

Conclusions:

Many institutions, which are common in larger and wealthier communities, are difficult to develop and sustain in small, geographically isolated and politically independent countries. The assessment tool, revised and applied to all 18 member states could provide a basis to formulate and implement a common strategy for quality improvement in the Region.

A summary of results will be presented to the annual meeting of Caribbean health ministers in April and the outcome offered to the ISQua conference in November both to describe national quality efforts in the Caribbean and to offer the model for assessment in other regions.